

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

GCSE Religious Studies
(5RS12/01)

Unit 12: Judaism

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This unit was sat by a reasonable number of candidates who mainly achieved good results. There were some strong candidates who performed well showing high standards of knowledge, understanding and personal opinions; weaker candidates struggled with some of the key words, ideas and issues.

Generally, candidates were able to respond well to question (b) and (d), giving their own developed reasons as well as taking into consideration alternative views in question (d). However it is important to note in question (b) the candidates must state what their opinions and reasons are for their point of view to gain marks. In question (d) candidates must give reasons to support their point of view and reasons why others may disagree with their opinion, including a reference usually to Judaism to gain the highest marks.

Many of the stronger candidates were aware of the key words and could give their meaning accurately although some specific Judaism terms were muddled and seemed more difficult for weaker candidates.

In section one, question 1 was more popular than question 2. In section one some weaker candidates struggled to explain why the Ten Commandments reveal the nature of the Almighty but many had good varied reasons as to why Jewish people are still expecting the Messiah. Those candidates who did question 2 seemed confident about the importance of the Abraham covenant but some confused it with other covenants. Most candidates could give their reasons about why Jewish people believe the Almighty created the world but some candidates went on side tracks about the design argument.

In section two, question 3 was more popular than question 4. Most candidates could explain why Jewish people might forgive the Holocaust and were confident about the main features of the Orthodox synagogue. Most could explain why some people support the State of Israel and express different views about the authority of the Bet Din. However many candidates did not know the key word Yishuv.

In section three the majority of candidates knew the key words but there was some confusion among weaker candidates about the different Jewish festivals, their meaning and importance. Weaker candidates muddled Pesach and Purim. Some candidates clearly did not know about the daily prayers of the Orthodox community.

In section four there was some confusion about whether the synagogue should be at the centre of the community in a literal sense or whether it should be a spiritual place at the centre of the community but generally candidates gained high marks for this question. Some candidates did not know the meaning of the key word shiva. A few of the weaker candidates struggled in answering question 8d about Jewish rituals connected with death.

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